

KHOTSO

November 2012

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- PCV Corner

Message from the Country Director



ED 13 PCVs... just arrived...

Dear Volunteers,

Work-wise, the arrival of 30 new ED trainees was the highlight of October (a really fun trip to the Garden Route with Michael was also a personal highlight!). For anyone who's been or is a Peace Corps Volunteer, greeting the trainees at the airport brings you back to your first impressions arriving in a new country, about to embark on an amazing chapter of your life. My wish for these soon-to-be Peace Corps Volunteers is that they enjoy their experience as much as I enjoyed mine.

So I wanted to mention something that I overheard at the CHED 11 mid-service workshop. We had just distributed the *Peace Corps Times*, the publication that PC/Washington puts out a few times a year, and a couple of Volunteers commented that they don't like to read it because (and I'm paraphrasing) it makes them feel inadequate to read about all these amazing things that other Volunteers around the world are doing. It kind of broke my heart to hear it.

Obviously it's not Peace Corps' intention to cause Volunteers to feel badly about themselves, but I can totally see how articles about Volunteers single-handedly wiping out malaria or coordinating the Special Olympics Games in Central America would make accomplishments like meeting

with a girls' group every week to offer them a safe space to talk about their issues and concerns (like ED 12 Hannah Campbell does) or teaching *maths* in a fun and engaging way (like ED 12 Kevin Koryto does) seem mundane. But they're not!!!

Every single day, you all are making a difference even if it doesn't always feel like it. In October, I visited Hannah and

Kevin and was told by their supervisors, counterparts and students and saw for myself what a great job they're doing, as role models, change agents and mentors. So take time to celebrate your successes, large and small! By the way, in the most recent *Peace Corps Times* there's a photo from a Peace Corps Partnership Project completed this year by our very own ED 10 Nate Landrum and his community. Check it out!

On a final note, CHED 11 Jess Wilhelm reported having an excellent vacation in Port St. Johns in October.

Khotsong!
Kathy





Arent, Kim



Bird, Mary Beth



Edmonds, Rachel



Eysallenne, Mishelle



Frye, Amanda



Hayes, Carol



Hodgkins, Miriam



Jiggetts, Jennifer



Johnson, Laura



Joshi, Shawn



Kary, Andrew



Kary, Erin



Kasper, Shorty



Kelleher, Chelsea



Ladabouche, Mary



Lawrence, Bonnie



Lofland, Jesse



Mackin, Keegan



Oney, Kyle



Pender, Melvis



Ratanavade, Narin



Reed, Charlotte



Schroeder, Zoe



Solano, Mike



Stock, Will



Thornton, Gerad



Torres, Elias



Van Baalen, Morgan



Whitley, Annie



Wickland, David



Peace Corps Lesotho
welcomes you to the Kingdom
in the Sky.

PCV & STAFF BIRTHDAYS

Birthday greetings go out to the following Volunteers and staff!

November

Nkoro, Eunicia (Training Center Manager) – 3
 Kruger, James – 3
 Lane, Courtney – 5
 Wagnac, Trina – 18
 Ranooe, Lebohang (Receptionist) – 20
 Lephoto, Clement (APCD ED) – 22
 Ellard, Terry – 28

December

Van Baalen, Morgan – 4
 Kelleher, Chelsea – 6
 Helie, Delia – 8
 Jayaraman, Aparna – 15
 Selete, Peter (Driver/PST Logistician) – 23
 Eysallenne, Mishelle – 26
 Ramaliehe, Maliabo (Janitor) – 30

PEACE CORPS LESOTHO HOLIDAYS (Office closed these days)**November**

Veteran's Day – 12 (US Holiday)
 Thanksgiving – 22 (US Holiday)

December

Christmas Day – 25 (US & LS Holiday)
 Boxing Day – 26 (LS Holiday)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS AND STAFF TRAVEL

Oct 29 – Nov 16 Ntate Mohale on leave
 Nov 5-6 M'e Selloane on leave
 Nov 5-9 Bo 'me Victoria, Malisema at Financial Assistants' Workshop in TZ
 Nov 6-8 Kathy on site visits in Mokhotlong
 Nov 9 Kathy on leave
 Nov 12-18 Bo 'me Masechaba, Mamokola, Mamakhetha at Food Security Workshop in TZ
 Nov 14 Kathy on site visits in Quthing
 Nov 18-20 ED 13 IL Workshops (North and South)
 Nov 19-23 Jim on leave
 Nov 25 – Dec 1 CHED 12 Phase III at Berea
 Dec 1 World AIDS Day
 Dec 6 CHED PAC Meeting
 Dec 10 ED 13 Swearing In
 Dec 11-13 ED 13 Supervisors Workshops (North and South)
 Dec 28 – Jan 4 Ntate Mohale on leave

2013 P&T CALENDAR

Note that Volunteers should not plan to take leave during events relevant to their group. If the dates below change and a Volunteer already has approved leave during the new dates, they will be excused from the event.

Jan 16-17 ED 12 Mid-Service
 Feb 7 VRFs due
 Feb 11-15 CHED 12 HIV/AIDS & PDM Workshop (South)
 Feb 18-22 CHED 12 HIV/AIDS & PDM Workshop (North)
 March 21-27 ED 13 Phase III

March 27 ED PAC Meeting
 April 22-26 CHED 13 PST TOT
 May 9-10 CHED 11 COS Conference
 June 7 CHED 13 Trainees Arrive; PST begins; VRFs due
 June 9-14 ED 13 HIV/AIDS & PDM Workshop (North)
 June 16-21 ED 13 HIV/AIDS & PDM Workshop (South)
 July 20-21 ED 13 Language IST (North and South)
 Aug 6 CHED 11 COS Date
 Aug 12 CHED 13 Swearing In
 Aug 13-15 CHED 13 Supervisors Workshops (North and South)
 Aug 30 – Sept 1 ED12 COS Conference
 Sept 9-11 CHED 12 Mid-Service
 Sept 16-20 ED 14 PST TOT
 Oct 7 VRFs due
 Oct 11 ED 14 Trainees Arrive; PST begins
 Nov 17-18 ED 14 IL Workshops (North and South)
 Nov 24-30 CHED 13 Phase III
 Dec 1 World AIDS Day
 Dec 9 ED 14 Swearing In
 Dec 11 ED 12 COS Date
 Dec 12-14 ED14 Supervisors Workshops (North and South)

Duty Officer Schedule

Nov 5 – 11 SSC
 Nov 12 – 18 ITS
 Nov 19 – 25 Financial Assistant
 Nov 26 – Dec 2 GSO
 Dec 3 – 9 CD
 Dec 10 – 16 DMO
 Dec 17 – 23 APCD (ED)
 Dec 24 – 30 APCD (CHED)
 Dec 31 – Jan 6 TM

STAFF MEMBER OF THE MONTH – Clement Lephoto, APCD/ED

In addition to being involved in almost every aspect of the Education PST, ntate Clement has put in many hours on the annual Project Status Reports. His work on the PSR has not just been on the Education part, but on several other parts of the very complicated and challenging report. As usual, he has worked with his customary calm and graciousness.

ADMIN CORNER by Jim**ED 13 PST**

No doubt everyone is aware that the ED 13 PST is under way. It is a great group of 30 really motivated trainees who have already embraced Lesotho and their prospective assignments to the max. Whatever you can do to help them in the training process (and beyond) would be greatly appreciated. We were all trainees (even me) at one time.

Living Allowance Survey

It is that time of the year again to complete the Living Allowance Survey. For the newer PCVs, it is (as my predecessor was fond of saying) an opportunity to "give yourself a raise!" It does require a little effort, but it might be worth it. (In 2010, the LA was increased 14% due to the results of the survey from 2009). Here is the catch, however. We need to have a response rate of at least 75% for PC HQ to even consider making an adjustment. No matter how much we preached in 2010 we only got 57% of the

PCVs in country to submit it and in 2011 it was 73%. As a result it went nowhere. We will email to each PCV a spread sheet of the survey, which you can complete on-line and email it back to us (vmofolo@peacecorps.gov and/or mmakhele@peacecorps.gov). For those of you who have unreliable internet service, we have attached a 'hard copy' of the survey at the back of this issue. Please try and find the time to complete and return it. If you would like a copy of the survey you completed last year to use as a guide, please let us know and we will arrange to get it to you.

Settling-in Allowance Survey

CHED12s who haven't completed and turned in their Settling-In Allowance survey, please do so while the prices or costs are still fresh in mind. Some of the previous groups have done a wonderful job in completing this survey on time so let's please keep the trend going.

Travel to South Africa

We have been notified by the U.S. Embassy this week that South Africa is currently issuing a maximum of seven days visa at the border crossings. If you enter South Africa and stay beyond the seven days you will be charged a penalty of up to R2,000.00 when you try to cross back into Lesotho. Although they won't make you pay the fine on the spot, you will not be allowed back in South Africa until you show them a proof of payment receipt from the South African High Commission office. The Embassy suggests that if you need a longer visa, you can apply for one at the South African High Commission in Maseru. There is no fee, for it but it can take some time to be approved so please keep that in mind.

Green Energy Challenge

Peace Corps Washington has initiated the **GREEN ENERGY CHALLENGE**, which is intended to encourage Peace Corps offices worldwide to become more energy efficient, educate staff about energy conservation and save money. Over the next year HQ will track every post's their electricity bills on a monthly basis. The post demonstrating the greatest (% change) utilities reduction from FY12 to FY13 will be recognized on the Peace Corps employee Intranet page. Please help Peace Corps Lesotho by turning off the lights in the VRC and only using the AC and heater when absolutely necessary.

Suggestion Box

Please be reminded that there is a Suggestion Box in the VRC in Maseru. Suggestions are read and discussed at our staff meetings. Suggestions should be specific and constructive. If you do not feel comfortable raising an issue with a staff member or your VAC rep, please take advantage of the Suggestion Box when you are in Maseru.

That's about it for now. As always please stay safe...!

ED CORNER by Dr. Lephotso & M'e Malitaba

This is the moment of happiness as we are rejoicing over the arrival of the new Trainees in Lesotho. We would like to thank all the volunteers who participated in all kinds for the preparation of these volunteers. Again, thank all who hosted and guided these trainees during their visit to your sites. We really appreciated your efforts as we know some of you are busy with the external classes writing their examination. Rea Leboha!

Gold Star Activities

ED12 Caitlin Vincent: Over the winter break, myself and Ntate Mafereka, the other science teacher, held winter classes. The atmosphere was more relaxed than usual, probably because it was only the Form C class and because me and Ntate Mafereka are both only 23 years old. Perhaps, being young ourselves, we



can better relate to them. Although all the Form Cs were attending winter classes, except for one girl (who is pregnant), we felt as if the students could be more motivated and put more effort into their work, especially because the JC examination was approaching. The last day of winter classes, I brought some snacks to school as well as my laptop to show my appreciation for their dedication. We ate and watched the movie called "Tsasa."

My students really enjoyed this movie. It's in Sesotho and is about students their age. It ties in a lot of issues they must confront (HIV/AIDS, sex/drugs/alcohol, decision-making) in an interesting, entertaining way. Although the movie provided many life skills lessons, it wasn't at all boring or overly didactic. Afterwards, we had a long, open discussion.

In the following weeks, I noticed that the Form C class seemed slightly different in a way that's difficult to describe. As a class, they seemed more confident and comfortable with each other, which is probably a result of the honest, open discussion we had without judgments being passed. It was probably one of the few times they were able to express their opinions to teachers at my school. Although I don't teach them this year, more of them were stopping by my house for extra help in science and maths. Therefore, I definitely feel as if there was a behavior change, even if it was difficult to measure. But I really do think this movie inspired them. I showed it in July and they still talk about it and ask me to show it again.

ED 13 Core Expectations Haikus

In PST we always review the Peace Corps Core Expectations and ask the trainees to use their creativity to express them. Following are the Core Expectations haikus developed by the ED 13 trainees.

1. Make a commitment to serve abroad for a full term of 27 months.
*I am here, so good.
Will serve well, commitment made.
Laughter, work, 27 months.*
2. Commit to improving the quality of life of the people with whom you live and work; and, in doing so, share your skills, adapt them, and learn new skills as needed.
*Share knowledge with them,
Be a flexible person.
Embrace Lesotho.*
3. Serve where the Peace Corps asks you to go, under conditions of hardship, if necessary, and with the flexibility needed for effective service.
*Go to wherever.
Despite potential hardship.
Deal with it, okay!*
4. Recognize that successful and sustainable development work is based on the local trust and confidence you build by living in, and respectfully integrating yourself into, your host community and culture.
*Success is based on
Integrating as trusted
'me le ntate.*

5. Recognize that you are responsible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for maintaining professional conduct and adhering to Peace Corps Lesotho policies and procedures.

*We come from abroad.
We're professional and sharp.
Serve everyday.*

6. Engage with host country partners in a spirit of cooperation, and mutual learning and respect.

*Respect host country.
Engage in strong partnership.
Spirit of Peace Corps.*

7. Work within the rules and regulations of the Peace Corps and the local and national laws of Lesotho.

*Work within the rules,
Both Peace Corps and Lesotho.
Be safe and happy.*

8. Exercise judgment and personal responsibility to protect your health, safety, and well-being and that of others.

*You're locked up abroad
Because you're an idiot,
You silly rabbit!*

9. Recognize that you will be perceived, in your host country and community, as a representative of the people, cultures, values, and traditions of the United States of America.

*Representative
Of the awesome USA
So don't do any crack!*

10. Represent responsibly the people, cultures, values, and traditions of Lesotho and your host community to people in the United States both during and following your service.

*To Americans,
Represent responsibly
Our Basotho friends.*

CHED CORNER by M'e Selloane & M'e Mamakhetha

Welcome to your first spring in Lesotho, CHED 12s! Soon you will be eating juicy peaches from the Mountain Kingdom.

New CHED Project Framework

The new framework is under review by Peace Corps Washington and we hope to finalize by December. A PAC meeting to review feedback from PC/W is scheduled for December 6.

Site Visits and Site Identification

'M'e 'Mamakhetha and Ntate Eric have been to site visits in Mohale's Hoek, Quthing, Mokhotlong and Thaba Tseka to visit a number of CHED 11 and 12 Volunteers. All volunteers seem to be doing well, love their sites and feel very safe. Meetings with the different supervisors and counterparts clearly revealed that all PCV are valuable assets to their different organizations. Keep up the good work!!!

Phase II Assignments

A great vote of thanks goes to all CHED 12s who continue to submit their assignments weekly. A gentle reminder goes to all those who do not submit weekly. The assignments are very important as assist us to assess how you are doing at site at different levels such as integration. The assignments also inform us of the training needs for Phase III. So keep on sending them. The deadline for submission is 26 November 2012. We hate to use the stick, but leave will not be approved until all assignments are satisfactorily completed and submitted.

Phase III Training

The Phase III training is scheduled for 26-30 November 2012 and will be conducted at the training village. All volunteers are expected to arrive at the training villages on 25 November 2012 and depart on 01 December 2012. Every volunteer will stay at his or her host family as during PST. Hope to see you in the beautiful plateau of Berea.

Gold Star Activities



CHED 12 Beth Pagan: Beth conducted a PACA workshop in Sesotho with her organization, Lekokoaneng Multipurpose Cooperative. The workshop was called Seasonal Calendar. She helped the organization examine how the needs of the community and organization change based on the different seasons of the year. The organization examined various activities that change throughout the year (planting and harvesting, income flows, expenditure flows, labor flows to South Africa, etc.) Beth also conducted an Appreciative Inquiry workshop in Sesotho with her organization. The organization examined the internal resources of the organization and the community. The organization also created a list of the various tangible and intangible internal resources available to them. Beth has done tremendously well as she translated all the material into Sesotho and did this on her own. Thumbs up to her for having learned Sesotho in such a short space of time!



CHED 11 Amanda Lawrence: Amanda was approached by a Class 4 teacher asking for her help in starting and an AIDS club. Amanda meets with 10 students every Wednesday to discuss HIV/AIDS. In their first session they just got to know each other and made a list of club rules. They have since started talking about the basics of HIV/AIDS, what it is, how it's spread etc. They had an organization come and use one of their classrooms at Bethesda for a testing event, and the head guy came to visit their AIDS group. She had the

kids play the Elephant and Lion game to show what AIDS was and they all remembered and understood!! More students have joined the club this year and they are starting to discuss the immune system and how HIV affects it. They have also had Abuti Ntja and Mahooana, from the AIDS youth group, come and do a presentation with the club and talk to them about myths regarding HIV/AIDS.

SAFETY & SECURITY CORNER by Ntate Nthoalo

Escape of Notorious Man from Prison

It is not my intention to scare anyone, but I feel the need to share with you the issue that has garnered a lot of media attention. A much talked about man who was in Maseru prison for about three months awaiting a trial of two charges of ritual murder was reported to have disappeared from the prison in October. The escape was described as "miraculous" and beyond the comprehension of the prison wardens. The Minister of Justice has assured all Basotho that efforts are in progress to hunt down the man both inside the country and beyond the. Given the seriousness and the magnitude of the crimes, the escape of the man is high profile and sensitive, and as such Volunteers are earnestly advised against commenting or getting involved in a way that will hamper their safety and security. Of course, you should always maintain vigilance with your RADAR switched on

and have open communication with Peace Corps if you have any concerns. Peace Corps will keep Volunteers abreast about any developments through DSR messages.

Facts About Maseru

Sometimes Volunteers complain that Peace Corps Lesotho uses scare tactics to block Volunteers out of Maseru. For clarification, while it is true that Volunteers' movement is strictly and carefully controlled in Maseru for evident safety and security reasons, the information reported about Maseru is based on facts through communication with the police, general crime data, statistics about crimes against Volunteers, and communication with the U.S. Embassy. We strongly believe that accurate and complete information are a vital part of the training to ensure Volunteers' safety and security in Lesotho.

IT CORNER by Deepak

Freedom of Information Act Reminder

Let us all gently remind ourselves that the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) provides the public with the right to request records from the Peace Corps. FOIA empowers any US citizen to fill out a form, pay a fee and request some or all official work related records including communication between any Peace Corps staff member and volunteer. Please be particularly mindful that your email correspondence is considered a record that falls within the parameters of FOIA. Most of the messages you send via SMS to staff members and to the whereabouts phone are entered into the Volunteer Information Database Application (VIDA), which also falls under the parameters of FOIA. Therefore, before you hit the "send" key on your computer or phone while emailing or texting any staff member to his or her official Peace Corps email address or phone, pause for a moment to consider whether or not your choice of words will be viewed as unprofessional and/or disrespectful, and thus embarrassing to the agency or to yourself should your email be included as part of a response to a FOIA request.

PCV CORNER

Volunteer Blog of the Month

This month's blog posting comes from Caitlin Fisher (ED 12).

One year.



Today marks one year in Lesotho. One year serving in the Peace Corps. One year away from my family. One year living in a strange place. One year developing relationships with new people from scratch. One year that I have leaned countless lessons about another culture, a different way of living, teaching, and the most crucial: lessons I have learned about myself and the things I find important. (Oh... and one year without taco bell)

365 days.
Three bags
Nine weeks of training.
One new language.
Two new countries visited.
Three awesome vacations,
And twenty-one vacation days spent.
One new ocean swam in.
Two tubes of sunscreen used.
One funeral.
And one wedding!
One birthday celebrated.
One really long, cold winter.
Three botched haircuts by a friend.

Three reports to the United States Government.
Seven trips to the local hospital.
One goat liver eaten.
One poop in my pants (woops!)
Three SIM cards lost.
Nineteen books read.
Seven walks across Qholaqhoe Mountain.
Two meetings with the US Ambassador.
Four Ministry of Education syllabi.
136 students.
Six exams given.
1.5 kg of instant coffee consumed.
676 photos taken.
Twenty-two new American friends.
Two new Basotho families.
One new home.

Here's to one more year! I couldn't have done it without both my support system in Lesotho, and the one at home. All of the packages, letters, calls, emails, and even Facebooks Likes have made my Peace Corps' service possible and kept me sane! I can't even describe the love I feel from everyone! Thanks for all the support and keeping me in your thoughts!

World AIDS Day

Submitted by Janelle Leza (ED12), DAR/Qacha's Nek



"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it's the only thing that ever has."
- Margaret Mead

This quote sits above my desk and motivates me every day to get out there and make a difference. However, it also reminds me that I am not alone - there are people out there to support me every day.

With December 1st, World AIDS Day, quickly approaching, Peace Corps Volunteers in Lesotho can work together to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS here in Lesotho.

Here are a few ideas to help you brainstorm possible activities for you and your community on December 1st.



1. Lead an interactive activity that teaches about HIV/AIDS.
2. Address the topic of HIV/AIDS in your Life Skills class.
3. Have a conversation with someone in your class, family, or community about HIV/AIDS.
4. Organize an awareness event in your community or camp town.
5. Hold a testing event.
6. Paint an AIDS ribbon in an area that can be seen by many people.
7. Hold a movie screening or book reading that has HIV/AIDS related themes - these two methods can often lead to great discussions with your audience.
8. Print and pass out activities from one of the past articles submitted by DAR members (i.e., word search, dot-to-dot, or crossword in Sesotho).

Remember that your District AIDS Representative is always here for you. If you have any questions, want pointers on an activity, or need help with obtaining resources/materials, please do not hesitate to ask us!

Comfort Food – From your PSN



Happy Stomach, Happy PCV

Submitted By Shanelle France (ED12),
PSN Member

I don't know about you, but the phrase "comfort food" has taken on a whole new meaning for me since being in Lesotho. The highly accredited, semantic scholars working for Webster's Dictionary define comfort food as, "simple, home-style food that brings comforting thoughts of home or childhood".

I've always been a food nerd and preferred watching the Food Network over cartoons any day, but I never fully understood the depth and importance of comfort food until I was removed from what I once considered "comfort". The first time I made pancakes with crispy edges (my dad's specialty) I was instantly brought back to my family's kitchen table. While in Durban I baked my mom's famous "chocolate surprise cake" for a fellow PCV's birthday, and it was as if I was offering a piece of the France family tradition to my new PC family. Food and the related associations have a powerful transcendent quality that can bring you home no matter where you are.

I can proudly say that I have mastered the art of baking in a Dutch oven, cooking on a two burner stove with limited utensils and finding as many ways as possible to consume a head of cabbage (I'm sure you all know what a feat it is to eat a head of cabbage alone). I'm the type of person that wakes up because my stomach is growling so loudly, begging, "FEED ME!" From sunup to sundown, I am thinking about the meals I will eat that day. I find it an exciting challenge to see what concoctions I can conjure with what ingredients are available; just call me the Billy Nye of the PCV "kitchen". With that said, I want to offer a few experimental ideas that you might want to test out.

Papa France's crispy edged pancakes: You can't go wrong with pancakes, but to add a little texture, put a generous amount of oil (1-2Tbsp) in the bottom of the skillet, pour in the batter, and move the skillet around to ensure that the oil hugs the entire circumference of the pancake (it should sizzle around the edges) and voila! Crispy, crunchy pancakes, with a fluffy center.

Mom's "go to" sweet and salty snack: If you're anything like my mom and you have indecisive taste buds, try out my mom's pop-in-your-mouth popcorn. Put just enough oil to cover the in bottom of your pot then add kernels so that they are fully embraced in the oil bath. Turn the flame down low to avoid burning (my mom would inevitably burn a kernel or two). Once popped to perfection, season with powdered sugar, salt and cinnamon.

G-ma's Green Beans: In advance, I apologize to any vegetarians, this will not pertain to you, but I assure you, these beans will rock your world if you cross over to the carnivorous side! My grams is Creole through and through (basically meaning any and all things are cooked in drippings, therefore, all nutritional value is lost, even when vegetables are involved). If you have access to bacon, fry some up in a pan. Once enough fat is rendered, throw in some chopped onions and cook until onions become translucent. While this is going on, boil your green beans, or

open a can 'o beans. If you're boiling fresh beans, take them out after 5-7minutes and add them to the beautiful married couple of bacon and onions, to make a trifecta of green bean goodness.

Good luck, happy eating, and much comfort!

Photo Share Contest

Johns Hopkins University sponsors an annual photography contest for their Photoshare website, a popular international event mobilizing amateur and professional photographers to share their photos for charitable and educational use.

Photographs can be submitted to Photoshare and then are able to be accessed by anyone who signs up to access the service for use on publications, manuals, etc. It's a free service with a wonderful library of photographs for health and development.

The contest has a top prize of \$1,000 USD. Deadline for Entries: December 17, 2012. Contest entries are accepted through Photoshare's Upload Photos submission form. For more information about the contest, visit the 2012 Photoshare Photo Contest Announcement: <http://www.photoshare.org/2012-photoshare-photo-contest>

Per Peace Corps policy, if a Volunteer won the contest, he/she would need to donate the prize money to a worthwhile institution or organization in the host country or, if he or she chooses, to the Peace Corps Partnership Fund.

Peace Corps Story Writing Competition for Global Dialogues

Peace Corps is collaborating with Global Dialogues (www.globaldialogues.org) to kick off an international story writing competition on World AIDS Day, December 1, 2012. It will run until April 1, 2013. Peace Corps Volunteers in all countries are encouraged to involve young people in their communities in this competition.

Story ideas can be serious or humorous and can focus on any aspect of HIV or a related social issue, such as violence against women or discrimination against a vulnerable group. Ideas can take any form, such as a short story, script, poem, comic strip, song, the simple description of an idea, or even a video. Winning ideas are selected by a succession of juries at national and international levels. The ideas are then transformed into high-quality, high-impact short films by professional filmmakers.

Formerly known as "Scenarios from Africa," this nonprofit organization professionally produces and widely distributes short films based on HIV/AIDS-related stories created by local communities. Launched in 1997, the organization has produced 39 films based on winning entries from five previous competitions. Most of these films are available in 30 languages. Between 1997 and 2011, more than 150,000 young people from over 50 countries have participated.

Peace Corps Volunteers and staff have been involved since "Scenarios" was launched, but this is the first formal collaboration between the two organizations. Some Volunteers have mobilized their communities to come up with story ideas. Others have worked with partner organizations and counterparts to involve communities in writing, acting in, and producing these films. Volunteers and Peace Corps language instructors have assisted in making the films available in local languages.

In working to create an entry, you can start the process now by mobilizing young people up to age 24 to generate ideas for a

short fiction film to address a community HIV/AIDS concern. The resulting films are important programming tools that generate discussions in many communities. Global Dialogues films have reached every country in sub-Saharan Africa and many countries beyond. Partners have broadcast them to more than 200 million people annually. A recent agreement with YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/user/scenariosafrica>) will enable even broader distribution. As a diverse community mobilization, education, research and media process, Global Dialogues is designed to improve the lives of those infected or affected by HIV/AIDS, reduce the vulnerability of populations at risk, and help local organizations develop their capacity for effective HIV/AIDS education. For updates, check back at www.peacecorps.gov/aids2012. For World AIDS Day 2012, Peace Corps also will publish a new edition of its popular HIV/AIDS Awareness 13-month Calendar. Quantities sufficient for Volunteers, counterparts, and staff will ship to all posts in November.



Congrats to the Winners of the ED 13 Halloween Costume Contest: 3rd Place Amanda Frey ("CD Kathy"), 1st Place Mike Solano ("Tupac Shakur"), 2nd Place Laura Johnson ("Professor Trelawney")

AROUND THE PEACE CORPS WORLD

The following slam-poem was written by an RPCV and current Peace Corps recruiter.

50 Years of Peace Corps: A Message for Soon to be Volunteers

The Peace Corps, is a twenty-seven-month-long-commitment, Little do you know, you are in it for life...

It all starts with that spark from someone, "Uncle Dave served in Peace Corps and he loved it", "Do you know they work in Thailand?" or the best and the most simple, "You would be great in the Peace Corps."

It's the highest compliment, the deepest calling.

And then the paper trail begins, blazing a path through a dense bureaucratic network of uploaded dreams and poorly stated ambitions.

We trace every spark, believing it will one day lead to a full fire of intention.

Really, it's your first endurance test, and it is not a smooth process believe me!

When volunteers start, their minds are wrapped around 1,000 different words for help,empower, assist, aid, facilitate, uplift, yet no idea how to use them in a sentence. Let alone in life.

Yes, we open borders, but more importantly, minds and hearts. Winning them, earning them, with the skills of our training and the purity of our efforts.

This is something those who are new to the family realize, and eventually, eventually, 9-12 months eventually....

You will go forth from this time, and this place, toting all that you can carry of your past life and loved ones.

And then, you serve.

Never, will you feel more alive - it will surprise you.

It is a progression of connection... at first, you are in your head and it's American, meets other.

Then you get more grounded, and volunteer, meets villager or teacher, meets student. And then, if you are lucky, the simplicity settles in, and it's human meets human, heart to heart.

It's all right there. It's tucked into the humble corners of each day.

Two years- will fly by. Watch carefully or you might miss it. Blink twice, and it's gone....

And then, you will leave those same coveted, carefully packed objects turned artifacts in the fault lines of all your cultural earthquakes.

And then, you come back.

You are returned volunteers, never former, and you try to trace the patterns of home and you stumble, and get dizzy, and people from the place you once knew ask

How was Malawi? Ecuador? Mauritania? Poland? How was Nicaragua? Mali? Panama? Vanuatu? Romania? How was Tanzania? And what did you do there?

"Well..." and you will pause...

"I changed the world. I changed myself."

It's been 50 years of sweat and smiles, moments and memories, adventure and admiration, respect and realization and waiting and waiting and waiting,

It's been 50 years of imagination and inspiration.

Fifty years on paper, but we are a part of so much more. We bring hope to the forgotten corners of the world, and find peace at our core.

-Meleia Egger
RPCV Malawi 2008-2010